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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews programs for gifted students in various countries, with particular attention to definitions of gifted students, identification procedures, program offerings, and evaluation procedures. The paper examines these aspects of programing in the following countries (sample subtopics in parentheses): Australia; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (specialized secondary schools for the academically as well as artistically talented); Bulgaria (national contests in music, dance, and theater); Poland; Venezuela (experimental open classroom for curriculum enrichment); Brazil (educational camps for the gifted); Indonesia (priority to development in science and technology); Israel (enrichment centers, services for gifted disadvantaged students); Taiwan (enrichment); and the United Kingdom (active role of the National Association for Gifted Children). Concluding comments focus on similarities of issues and program efforts across countries. (CL)

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Commissioned Paper:

An International Perspective

On Gifted and Talented Programs

by

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Different countries and societies vary in their attitude toward what constitutes excellence. As a result, the institutional arrangements made to develop excellence and to nurture talent are equally varied. This paper will discuss a number of programs for the gifted in selected countries, examining the definition of gifted, the identification procedures, the program offerings and where available, the evaluation procedures. Following a general discussion of programs, summarizing statements will be made concerning general practices for the gifted on an international level.

The Australian Schools Commission (1980) published a report entitled The Education of Gifted Students, in which they define gifted as students who possess to an outstanding degree of demonstrated competence or potential in intellectual, creative and/or other abilities and need different education or services beyond those provided by the regular school program. The commission explored several issues related to the identification of gifted students such as achievement versus potential, identifying gifted among minority and disadvantaged groups and underachievers. They recommended that the identification procedures be appropriate to the type of giftedness being served and that a range of procedures be used such as tests, teacher and parent judgments and performance and product evaluation. Ability grouping, acceleration, enrichment and curriculum modification were the organizational and instructional options that were itemized.

The Commission listed several necessary and key provisions for successful programs for gifted. These were: teachers, curriculum differentiation, student selection procedures, a statement of philosophy and objectives, staff orientation, an evaluation plan, and administrative arrangements.

A survey of existing programs in the Australian states includes: New South Wales has Opportunity classes, which are special classes made up of gifted children with IQ scores of 125 and above and good school records; Victoria, with a Gifted Children's Task Force which provides consultancy to teachers and schools; Queensland, which meets the needs and interests of the gifted through enrichment and uses community participation in the schools to offer a wider variety of educational experiences; South Australia, meeting the needs of the gifted in the regular classroom through enrichment; Western Australia, with special programs for creatively gifted secondary students and a variety of programs in primary schools ranging from part-time classes to special classes and advanced placement at the secondary level; Tasmania reported enrichment activities and short-term pullout programs; Australian Capital Territory, providing individual development and progression in the regular classroom and the Northern Territory providing for the gifted through enrichment in the regular class.

The Northern Territory of Australia issued a policy document through the Department of Education concerned with gifted children. They report special attention is given to modifications for Aboriginal children and children whose ethnic/social background or personality characteristics may require differentiated programming or identification procedures. The document recommends full-time classes or in-class enrichment as placement options, depending on the number of gifted children needing service. A Principal Education Officer is responsible for the coordination and implementation of

gifted programs in the Northern Territory. Creighton (1961) discusses education for the gifted in the U.S.S.R. and observes the following:

> Talent, in the Soviet view, is a human capability that finds its expression and development in a definite activity requiring that ability. Talent is specific, concrete and reveals itself in activity; it therefore requires opportunity and special institutions and facilities for its development. Soviet statesmen and educators have always stressed the importance of providing such facilities; a wide network of institutions has been developed and large sums spent on them.
>
> This search calls for a constant effort on the part of the teachers, educationists and persons working with young people, and leaders in every field. Schools, the Pioneer organizations, the Young Communist League, trade unions, the Society of Inventors, and the organizations of writers, architects, artists, and composers encourage it, while the Press is constantly impressing its importance on its readers (p. 247).

The Soviet system provides specialized secondary schools and special facilities and schools for the academically talented as well as for the talented in music, dance, theater, art and sports. All-Soviet contests of Olympiads are conducted in mathematics, physics, literature, biology, geography and philosophy. The participation in these Olympiads is between 10,000 - 20,000. In addition, there are a number of outside school programs for developing talents such as Pioneer Palaces, Pioneer Houses, Pioneer Camps and Cultural Clubs, all of which provide accelerated and advanced scholastic services, recreational facilities and guidance.

Bulgaria, under the direction and leadership of Madame Zhokova, has established a national program for creatively gifted which affords contests in music, dance and theater which culminates in a week-long festival, called the Banner of Peace and involves over 5,000 children from throughout the world. These contests and the festival are supported and attended by the organizations and unions of writers, architects, artists and composers who function as both mentors and teachers to the students. The children are identified through performance and product evaluation and teacher and parent recommendation.

Borzym (1983) in a fall meeting in Bulgaria reported on education for the gifted in Poland. She stated that an interdisciplinary commission whose charge was to study the problem of talented manpower with the objective of stimulating activities which would lead to the identification of talented people and the provision of programs for them, made the following recommendations:

1. Primary schools curricula should pose greater demands on gifted children and in individual cases allow an acceleration of the syllabus leading to their earlier school-leaving.

2. Create special-profile secondary schools or classes for children with special interests such as sports, art, languages, and mathematics.

3. Allow talented students in colleges and universities to follow individual broader and/or accelerated courses of studies ... and generally differentiate the demands made on students depending on their abilities.

The programs for the gifted in Poland as well as other U.S.S.R. countries are primarily for the intellectually gifted and they are identified through their performance and scores at various examinations and competitions, school work and information gathered from teachers' observations. Psychological measures are seldom used and only as a subsidiary assessment. Bulgaria has used the Ravens Matrices and the Stanford Binet has been translated by a psychologist named Pirov.

In summary, the provisions for the gifted in the U.S.S.R. include acceleration of courses leading to earlier school-leaving; special classes in secondary schools in mathematics, physics, humanities, biology, chemistry, all taught by teachers who have been identified as having higher professional standards and ranking; experimental mathematics classes which are taught by university professors; schools or classes in which a foreign language is the language of instruction for all subjects (such as Russian, English, French, German, Chinese); optional tutorials which offer intensive work in special interest subjects, similar to tutorials and seminars provided by university work; special interest clubs and associations, such as physics and technology clubs and mathematics clubs; subject olympiads which lead to annual national competitions in mathematics, biology, literature, foreign languages, and history; and a Patents Bureau in which inventions and designs of children can be assessed, accepted and patented to encourage creativity and invention.

Teachers are selected for these various options and provisions on the basis of their willingness to experiment, expressed interest in gifted, and high level of competence in their individual subject areas.

Eduardo Plaza (1979) at the Second World Conference on Gifted in San Francisco discussed programs for the gifted in Venezuela and reported on three major projects undertaken by an Institute for Educational Consulting. The first project is an experimental open classroom for curriculum enrichment; the second complementary education which provides out-of-school opportunities for students to work in music, fine arts, expressive arts and sciences; and counseling geared toward gifted students.

Recently Venezuela has established a Ministry of Intelligence under the leadership of Professor Machado which has as its goal the enhancement of the nation's intellectual resources, with emphasis on the gifted. The provisions are offered in the regular classroom with an emphasis on individualization and critical, creative thinking. Intensive inservice for all teachers has been provided under the leadership of DeBono from the United Kingdom.

Brazilian programs for the gifted are administered through the National Center of Special Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Their definition recognizes several types of giftedness, including intellectual, academic, creative, performing arts and leadership. The

national policy covers identification, the need for articulation of community resources and the provision of programs.

Identification methods include psychological testing, evaluation of school performance, parent and teacher interviews and observation. Special curriculum has been developed for the gifted from grades 4-8 and this curriculum has been evaluated and expanded annually.

Federal University under the direction of Professor Maria Mira provides an accelerated mathematics program for gifted ages 12-14, as well as offering teacher training in the area of the gifted. The Brazilian Association for the Gifted, founded in 1978 provides a number of services to parents, teachers and gifted children such as national conferences, educational camps for gifted with an emphasis on locating minority and disadvantaged gifted students. In the camp, there is emphasis on skill development and leadership, as well as creativity.

In July of 1983, Semiawan reported on an Indonesian Seven Year Plan for the Educational Services for the gifted and talented at the World Conference for the Gifted in Manila. She stated that priority is to be given to the development of the gifted in science and technology (1982-86), to be followed by program development in the humanities and social sciences (1985-89). A task force has been established and has recommended that the identification of gifted be based on intelligence test scores, school achievement, and teacher nomination as screening devices followed by selection based on scores of intelligence, creativity, and standardized achievement tests and a teacher and student questionnaire. Continuous progress and self-instructional modules are being used to afford gifted students opportunities for acceleration. Fellowships are given to gifted students who demonstrate high achievement both as an incentive and bonus. Teachers are being given special inservice training and the program is funded through the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Israel has a Department of Gifted Children which functions out of the Ministry of Education and provides financial and logistical support to help them provide programs for gifted and teacher training. Enrichment centers provide for approximately 30-40 percent of the potentially identifiable gifted population in Israel, ages 6-17. The Centers are funded on a shared-cost basis by parents' tuition, the Ministry of Education and the local sponsoring agent, whether it be a University, public school or private agency. The programs tend to focus on mathematics and science with computer-based and laboratory experiences. Special classes are provided for the highly gifted who are viewed as needing a more complete and intensive program. Specially prepared curriculum have been developed for these classes and a complete program of study is available from grades three to twelve. The curriculum provides acceleration, a greater range of learning opportunities and an increased breadth of study.

Correspondence courses through the Open University, mentor programs and private industry-sponsored courses meet the need for gifted students who require more specialization.

Teachers in gifted programs in Israel are selected from the general pool of teachers having evidenced competence in their fields and a sensitivity to

the special needs of gifted. Teachers are also provided with appropriate inservice training. Israel is also concerned with gifted disadvantaged children from low-income culturally different or minority populations. Smilansky (1978) and Schmueli (1983) at the World Conference of Gifted both report on the disadvantaged and minority gifted student. Smilansky (1978) reports on the techniques of locating and serving these students through centers. Sixteen schools in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are served in two centers. The schools serve the students who are in the upper quarter of the elementary school according to teacher judgment and test criteria. Smilansky calls this a program for the gifted by assuming that these children are the more gifted in their group. In other words, it is not the regular assignment of giftedness as the upper 2 percent or the upper of any other percentage that somebody uses, but it is the assumption that they are potentially the more gifted in their own group. Although the average IQ of the upper quarter of the group is around 102 on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, an average group in terms of national norms in Israel, they are the upper group or the more gifted within their own group.

The children meet twice a week in the afternoon and during the entire summer for grades six, seven and eight, six days a week. They meet in a center, usually a high school, and the emphasis is on developing a group spirit and an attempt to build a different culture which emphasizes intellectual development and giving priority to learning as a counter culture to the dominant one in the disadvantaged area where other values predominate.

Another model used is the boarding program. This is particularly useful with the gifted adolescent student who needs additional assistance to develop their potential. The program began in 1960 and today includes 4,000 minority and disadvantaged students. The results show that a boarding school program costs twice as much as regular high school, but the results indicate double the level of those who graduate who are college bound and double the proportion of those who then graduate from the universities. "It costs twice as much, but produces twice as much." (Smilansky, 1978, p. 45)

The curriculum for the boarding school is based on modular units emphasizing sex roles, career education, relations with family, leadership and responsibility to the community and country. There is also a heavy emphasis on counseling.

Lin and Wu (1982) described experimental programs in Taiwan (Republic of China) as involving more than 3,000 students in 36 elementary and 19 junior high schools. The goals of the program are:

> ...to study the intellectual characteristics and creative abilities of the gifted; to develop appropriate curriculum and teaching methods for gifted students; to cultivate and develop an integrated and healthy personality of the gifted; and to determine a suitable educational system for the gifted. (p. 54)

Students are served in special classes or within the regular classroom if there are not sufficient students to form a class of gifted. The emphasis is on enrichment to broaden and amplify students' experiences and

knowledge. Field trips, social activities, research and advanced study as well as athletic and recreational activities are provided during the summer.

Special education centers have been set up at Normal University and Teachers College to train teachers and professors. The Ministry publishes a journal, Gifted Education Quarterly, and supplies materials, training, research, curriculum design and information to parents and teachers.

The United Kingdom as reported by Marjoram (1981), states that there is a growing awareness of the idea of giftedness and an increasing appreciation for the educational needs of the able.

One organization that has been very active in the United Kingdom is the National Association for Gifted (NAGC). They report (1982) that the identification procedures have become broader and more complex, with the instruments including those measuring creativity, aptitude, self-concept and attitudes. They also mention that there is a willingness to view identification and provision as inextricably interrelated. In a recent survey, NAGC found that in England, Scotland and Wales, 64 of 71 colleges that were surveyed supported the principle of enabling teachers to acquire training in the area of the gifted. They also surveyed the local educational authorities and found that 54 of 59 supported the principle of enabling teachers to acquire skills and understandings needed to work with the gifted. NAGC offers weekend courses, holiday courses, regional conferences, and counseling facilities. In addition, a trust agency, the Leonardo Trust is serving as an information bureau and provides workshops for teachers, gifted children and their parents. In this brief overview, several generalizations can be made concerning the identifying and nurturing of the gifted and talented. In general, in countries all over the world, whether the countries are developed or less developed there is a concern for locating and serving the gifted. This is evidenced by the over fifty-five countries which currently belong to the World Council for Gifted and Talented, whose secretariat is located at the University of South Florida, in Tampa. The philosophical base and motivations may vary, for example, in some cases such as the U.S.S.R., where there is motivation for developing brainpower and specialized talents; in comparison to other countries where the motivation is a concern for equal educational opportunity and self-development as well as meeting society's needs. Therefore, it can be said that under various political and economical systems, there are provisions for gifted and while the underlying philosophy may differ, the issues and program efforts for gifted are quite similar.

For example, most countries are supporting a need to develop broader and more liberal definitions of gifted education. However, most countries are currently serving intellectual giftedness and have added or are planning to add creativity. In the early stages, most nations seem to focus on intellectual or academic development and then move on to performing arts. Yet, in some countries, dance, music, and drama receive more attention, because they are viewed as less controversial and less elitist.

The basic identification procedures around the world include assessment of intellectual or academic aptitude, many using adaptations of instruments

from the United States and include some awareness of the multistep process such as initial screening, selection and evaluation. Yet, evaluation and research on identification instruments and procedures is a rarity in most countries.

Programs for the gifted include a variety of options, such as special classes, enrichment in the regular classroom and some form of acceleration. Again, most countries recognize the need for curricular and instructional differentiation varying the breadth, depth, tempo and nature of the educational programs to meet the needs of the gifted. Teacher education for working with the gifted consists mostly of inservice and is not widespread.

Out-of-school provisions are provided in a significant number of countries and oftentimes are the only provisions for gifted, such as the extracurricular centers in South Africa, and the activities of the National Association for Gifted in the United Kingdom. Mentor programs, the relating of adult specialists to gifted students, also appear to be a common practice for many countries.

In some countries, the guiding principle appears to be one of the schools encouraging an individual to develop his/her potential in areas of national needs; whereas, in other countries it is the individual's interests and needs that are developed.

Last, there is a concern for identifying and nurturing gifted students from disadvantaged or culturally different minority populations in a number of countries and this concern is growing. Several countries are focusing on ways of identifying these different and/or disadvantaged students, notably Israel, Venezula and Brazil. The program efforts for these students vary, but do have several common areas, namely, a wide and flexible identification procedure and individualized programs with an emphasis on career counseling and guidance. The program efforts are also highly different, ranging from summer programs, after-school programs to total boarding school efforts to locate and serve these under-served students.

One last observation can be made and that is that gifted education in many countries is not part of the total educational effort. It may well be that because the gifted and talented make up a relatively small proportion of the population, ranging from some countries serving 2 percent to others serving 25 percent. Gifted education may be viewed as intended for and carried out by a small number of advocates. Gifted education to thrive in any country must be viewed as a part of the total program and be involved in total school planning for the pursuit of individual talent identificaiton and development and the acquisition of excellence of all.

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